NYTimes APR 1 ? 1974

When Insanity Holds the Scepter

By Russel V. Lee

Craziness occurs in kings. Psychotic emperors, presidents, prime ministers and dictators have left their smudged marks on every page of history. Some rule today. An inquiry in depth into the role of madness in human affairs would provide a fascinating field to be cultivated by a team of historians and psychiatrists. The harvest of bizarre events wrought by deranged leaders would be a rich one.

This is not surprising, for 5 per cent of all men are mad. By simple statistical probability some of these men will achieve power. Indeed, this likelihood exceeds probability for a number of reasons. In a dynastic regime tendencies to aberration, which are often genetically linked, are passed on to the heir-apparent, often exaggerated by inbreeding.

In a democratic regime the very qualities of egocentricity and megalomania, characteristic of many psychoses, are precisely those that lead men to aspire to high office. In fact, there are those who say that the very fact of aspiration to high office is *ipso facto* proof of mental derangement. I would not go so far.

In our time we have seen one of the most highly developed and intellectual peoples of all time completely subjected to the absolute power of a textbook paraniac — Adolph Hitler. Such phenomena, alas for mankind, tend to be recurrent.

In the days gone by such occurrences, while deplorable, were tolerable. Sometimes they were amusing enough to add to the nation's gaiety, as in the case of mad King Ludwig I of Bavaria, or Farouk, the last ruler of Egypt. To be sure, the demented George III lost the British crown its brightest jewel, and a little later the diminutive, strutting paranoiac, Napoleon Bonaparte, bathed all Europe in blood and left the flower of France to perish in the snows of Russia.

The events of the terrible twentieth century, which led up to this awesome denouement, provide the best examples of the power of madmen to abolish rational behavior. The century opened on an optimistic and complacent world —a world that believed in progress, a world that believed that with the application of the great scientific discoveries and the spread of liberal democracy in time all would be well. We knew, of course, that there were a few despotisms like Russia, but we believed this would change. We were practical. We talked peace and armed ourselves to the teeth. But withal we were stupid—stupid enough to tolerate madmen in positions of power. They brought us to the brink of destruction.

Kaiser Wilhelm II was the first. This unfortunate birth-maimed, mother-hating, vain, insecure, strutting, ridiculous adult adolescent ruled Germany — Germany with its magnificent technology, its superbly trained army. He played with it as a boy does with lead soldiers. Even his people recognized that he was not a normal man, but they did nothing.

When the events at Sarajevo took place the Kaiser was incompetent to stop the avalanche toward war. There are, of course, many explanations as to why World War I began, but it would not have begun if the Kaiser of Germany had been competent. It might have been prevented if the Czar of all the Russias had been strong.

Nicholas II was weak of will and an intellectual by any norms, dominated by his wife, Alexandra, who was the slave of the dissolute mad monk, Rasputin. So, by sad mischance we had the hypomaniacal Kaiser and the weak-willed Czar in the two most powerful positions in the world. The result was the senseless World War I —a war in which the best young men of France and England died in the mud of Flanders with genetic effects on the stock of both countries that are all too apparent today.

The Peace of Versailles, which could have ushered in the brave new world, was a travesty. It was the product of strange men, none of whom was strictly normal or psychologically stable. The chief character, of course, was Woodrow Wilson—one of the tragic figures of history. His was the most brilliant brain that had ever occupied the Presidency, with a popularity in Europe never approached by any American before or since, in a position where he could have brought Utopia to a war-sick world.

But he was not mentally sound. He had had a number of "little strokes"; his fine mind was shattered; his judgment was gone; and he was unaware of the change. He went on with his disease to complete desuetude and, by virtue of gross fraud on the part of his second wife, Edith, and his physician, occupied the Presidency for nine months of total incapacity.

The others were abnormal in different ways. Georges Clemenceau, the Tiger of France, was indeed a tiger psychologically, devoid of mercy, devoid of foresight, savage toward his enemies, fit perhaps for war, completely ridiculous as a peacemaker. David Lloyd George, whose character was described by his son's biographer, was probably a manic-depressive. Vittorio Orlando was a nothing. These men, not one of whom was mentally fit, made the most important peace in history up to that time.

The interplay between the men was largely dominated by abnormal personalities. First to appear was Benito Mussolini, strange poster figure, with delusions of grandeur and traits of paranoia and enormous egocentricity. (It is not easy to classify psychopathically, but he certainly was not normal mentally.)

In Russia there was [illegible]

the man of ste
of millions of
pletely devoid
he was a socio
and in complet

Hitler could
in the medical
classic example
the world, he a
He had profou
sions of persec
bined with con
characteristic
We all knew
ridiculed him,
in. France had
prime ministers

We need
this problem b
and political
a special positi
leged communi
of complete re
man's condit
when the pac
Congressman,
say other nati
problem could
any one nati
by [illegible]
gain on each
also a powerful
gain on each
by [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[